

Focus affinity in Spanish: Syntactic functions and conditional probabilities

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In these experiments, we tested the impact of two factors on the focus affinity of syntactic constituents: (i) the constituent's syntactic function, (ii) the constituent's probability. In the first experiment we tested the focus affinity of three syntactic functions in Spanish: depictive secondary predicate (DEP), locative adjunct (LOC) and instrument adjunct (INST). We have found that DEP is most likely to be interpreted as focus followed by INST and by LOC. With respect to their focus affinity the syntactic functions thus can be ranked DEP > INST > LOC. In a second experiment we determined the conditional probability of the constituents which were used in the first experiment. A statistical analysis combining the results from both experiments has shown that a constituent's syntactic function is a much stronger predictor for focus affinity than a constituent's probability.

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